



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

C743: Is It Too Late to Practice?



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With nimble movements from his fingers, Zhang Xuan precisely manipulated the metallic fluids with his zhenqi.

Those metallic fluids clashed with one another in midair, producing resounding melodic metallic clangs reminiscent of the music from a keyboard.

If a blacksmith were to be present here, he would surely be left with his mouth agape upon seeing this sight.

This was no longer smithing but a performance! It was a melody perfectly aligned with nature!

The reason Wu Yangzi's Zither Forging Technique was so sought after was due to its alignment with nature, making the arduous smithing a pleasurable activity. However, the smithing technique that Zhang Xuan was utilizing here was clearly far more profound than the Zither Forging Technique!

Not only was it an enjoyment to the eyes and the ears, one might even find one's soul resonating in pleasure to it.

Heaven's Path Smith Art!

Hu hu hu!

Before long, the eight metallic fluids were completely synthesized with one another, forming a solid alloy. Following which, Zhang Xuan threw the alloy into the water trough by the side.

Tz la!

As soon as the searing metal alloy came into contact with the water, steam immediately rose from the water surface.

This was the final step of smithing, quenching!

Typically, smithing consisted of three steps—synthesizing the metals and ores into an alloy, forging the alloy into its intended form, and quenching the weapon to strengthen the material. Zhang Xuan had jumped from the first phase right into the third phase, skipping the second phase.

In smithing, the forging phase was extremely important. If a weapon was forged properly, it could enhance its grade as well.

Skipping the second phase meant that his work couldn't be considered as a true weapon, and thus, its grade would take a steep fall. However, it also spared him from the most arduous and lengthy process of hammering his weapon into its intended form, thus significantly speeding up his smithing process.

Hu!

The searing alloy caused the calm water in the trough to bubble furiously. After some time, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, retrieving the alloy from the water.

Timing was essential for quenching. The duration for which a weapon was immersed into a quenching fluid would affect the quality of the end product.

Zhang Xuan had used eight different types of ores and metals to create his alloy, each with vastly different properties. While they could serve to complement each other's strengths, if he couldn't grasp the perfect timing for the quenching, it could introduce an imbalance within the weapon, causing the various metals and ores to hinder the functions of one another. If that were to happen, the resulting alloy would be severely weakened, turning it into a failed product.

"Alright, this... should be it..."

Having completed the quenching process, Zhang Xuan glanced at the metal lump in his palm and scratched his head awkwardly.

If he were to take this metal lump out and call it a weapon, he would surely be mocked by the other blacksmiths, and his reputation would plummet. Fortunately, he was only in a simulation.

Sighing deeply, he walked up to the grading pedestal and placed the metal lump on it.

The grading pedestal served to gauge the quality of the weapon smithed, and as long as the weapon achieved the required grade, the examinee would be deemed to have cleared the examination.

Weng!

A light buzz sounded, and a red light glowed.

Following which, a mechanic voice announced, "Using the most basic Lava Stone, White Steel, Black Pebble... the examinee has managed to smith a Phantom low-tier weapon. Congratulations, you have passed the 1-star blacksmith examination!"

"This metal lump has reached Phantom low-tier? Not bad..." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

In truth, this was his first time smithing, so he didn't have a precise gauge of how he had fared. To think that this lump of metal would be considered as a Phantom low-tier weapon!

Weapons could be divided into five tiers—God, Saint, Spirit, Phantom, and Mortal.

The criterion for clearing the 1-star blacksmith examination was to smith a Mortal pinnacle weapon. Even though the weapon Zhang Xuan had smithed using the Heaven's Path Smith Art was crude, bearing no semblance to a weapon whatsoever, it was still graded as a Phantom low-tier weapon due to the quality of its alloy.

If it were to be properly forged into a weapon, it could easily reach Phantom intermediate-tier or even high-tier.

After clearing the 1-star examination, Zhang Xuan spoke up without any hesitation.

"I request to challenge the 2-star blacksmith examination!"

Ji ya ya!

The entire area abruptly darkened, and the rumbling of mechanisms whirring into action sounded. By the time the area lit up once more, he was already in another hall.

The entire layout was similar to the 1-star examination hall, but the area was visibly larger. There was a larger variety of ores and metals placed on the table in the room, and most of them were higher grade and rarer than the ones offered in the 1-star examination.

"Time to start work again!"

After swiftly examining the selection of ores and metals, Zhang Xuan picked 17 of them and threw them into the furnace. Working as he had previously, another metal lump was soon standing in front of him before long.

This metal lump looked even more horrendous than the previous one smithed. It was completely black, and no one would ever be able to make a correlation between it and a weapon.

This was the result of skipping the forging phase of the smithing process.

The forging process was essential to giving shape to the alloy. If one wanted a sword, one would have to hammer it into a sword. If one wanted a dagger, one would have to hammer it into a dagger.

However, putting aside the fact that this phase was extremely time-consuming, hammering was also a skill that one could only master through hands-on experience. With no prior experience whatsoever, it would be nigh impossible for Zhang Xuan to shape the weapons properly even if he were to attempt it in earnest.

Since that was the case, he decided to skip it altogether.

Once again, he placed the metal lump on the grading pedestal.

Weng!

With a brilliant flash of red light, a mechanical voice announced, "... the examinee has managed to smith a Phantom intermediate-tier weapon. Congratulations, you have passed the 2-star blacksmith examination!"

After clearing the 2-star blacksmith examination, Zhang Xuan immediately moved on to the 3-star.

An hour later, taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan said, "I request to challenge the 5-star blacksmith examination!"

After challenging four examinations consecutively, he was starting to feel a little drained despite his pure zhenqi.

Hu la!

The mechanisms rumbled into action once more, and an even larger room came into sight.

"They are all actually the same hall, it's just my perception of it that has changed..."

After undergoing the 'venue switching' procedure several times, Zhang Xuan soon realized that despite the various differences among the examination halls, the location where he was hadn't changed at all.

In the first place, the examination halls were only a simulation created by the Ocean of Weapons, not a real location. As such, changing the venue wasn't a difficult job,

"Ashenstar Rock, Purpletopaz Metal, Greendust Stone... The materials offered in this examination sure are far better than the ones in the previous examinations..." Zhang Xuan remarked in awe as he examined the selection of ores and metals in the room.

There were plenty of rare materials in the previous four examinations as well, but they paled in comparison to the current spread before him.

Both the Ashenstar Rock and the Purpletopaz Metal were materials which Transcendent Mortal experts would kill to get their hands on. With them, they could forge top-notch weapons.

However, these superior materials did little to alleviate the grimness on Zhang Xuan's face. While better materials did allow for the forging of better weapons, the criterion to clearing the examination was rising at an even faster pace.

To clear the 5-star blacksmith examination, he would have to smith a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon. It was impossible to smith a weapon of that tier with just good materials in hand!

More importantly, one had to wield incredible control over the metals and ores and command an extremely high understanding of the quenching process. Otherwise, the slightest mistake made could result in the wastage of these precious materials.

Hu hu hu!

Zhang Xuan's hands went through the various metals and ores nimbly, synthesizing them together one by one. Unlike previous times, he was working with the metals and ores in the furnace this time around. As such, he had to regulate the temperature in the furnace through his zhenqi simultaneously.

Each metal and ore had its own melting point. In order to create a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon, each material had to be processed carefully to bring out the finest properties within it in the resulting alloy, so the temperature had to be carefully regulated in the synthesis phase.

Soon, just as Zhang Xuan's zhenqi was just about to be completely depleted, he finally finished synthesizing the last ore into the alloy.

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan threw the metal lump into the water trough by the side.

"Quench!"

Tzzzzz!

A dense layer of mist formed around the water trough, concealing it from sight. Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight to keep a close eye on even the most trivial of changes in the metal lump, and as its quality finally reached its peak, he quickly took it out.

Based on his experience in the previous examinations, he learned that it was easier for him to grasp the condition of the quenching process through his Eye of Insight, thus further enhancing the quality of the final product.

"Test!"

Once again, Zhang Xuan placed the metal lump on the grading pedestal.

Weng!

A mechanical voice announced, "... the examinee has managed to smith a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon. Congratulations, you have passed the 5-star blacksmith examination!"

"I've passed the examination!" Seeing that it was a success, Zhang Xuan's body finally gave into exhaustion, and he fell weakly onto the ground.

Even though he had skipped the hammering stage, it was still tough work controlling the flames in the furnace with his zhenqi. At this point, his zhenqi was nearly completely depleted.

It was fortunately that he had still succeeded eventually.

"I should heal up first." Sitting on the ground, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a jade box appeared in his hands.

Opening the jade box, he immediately felt a gush of incredibly pure spiritual energy blowing at him; it felt as if small needles were pricking his skin, creating a tingling sensation.

A translucent stone sat inside the box.

This was Zhang Xuan's first time using a high-tier spirit stone.

Those whose cultivation was too low would be unable to assimilate the pure spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stones into their body. Even if they could absorb it, the spiritual energy would still leak from the minuscule pores in their meridians.

The meridians within the human body was similar to a sandpit in some ways. There were many fine pores in them such that while thick and viscous mud could flow through it, pure water would usually seep right through those pores, resulting in immense wastage.

In this analogy, the pure water would be referring to the concentrated spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stone.

Spiritual energy, in its purest form, was extremely fine, to the point that it could easily seep through the smallest openings. Even if an ordinary human were to try to absorb the spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stone, they wouldn't be able to retain the slightest bit of it in their body.

Only upon reaching Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm would the openings in one's body be sealed like a cocoon, forming a Seamless Body. Only then would one be able to absorb the spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stone to strive for greater heights.

Zhang Xuan was currently only at Cosmos Bridge realm, three realms away from reaching Chrysalis realm. Typically speaking, even if he had a high-tier spirit stone in his possession, he shouldn't be able to use it.

However, having cultivated Heaven's Path zhenqi, his body had already been reformed by it, granting him a physical body far stronger than other cultivators. On top of that, he had also reached the Second Incandescence of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body. This granted him enhanced control over his body, allowing him to seal his pores to retain the fine spiritual energy from the high-tier spirit stone within his body.

Gu gu gu gu!

As the pure spiritual energy circulated in Zhang Xuan's body as per the Heaven's Path Divine Art, it was swiftly converted into zhenqi before being deposited in his dantian.

His depleted dantian swiftly filled up, reaching full capacity within thirty minutes.

"As expected of a high-tier spirit stone, I was able to recover swiftly!" Zhang Xuan stood up and did some stretches.

If it had been a middle-tier spirit stone or a Spirit Gathering Formation, it would have taken at least several hours for his zhenqi to fully recover. However, through absorbing the spiritual energy in a high-tier spirit stone via the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was able to recover within just thirty minutes. This was a pace comparable to most pills forged specially for recovering one's zhenqi!

'I still have another hour to go!' Zhang Xuan thought in delight as he returned the high-tier spirit stone to his storage ring.

With an hour left, perhaps he might have enough time to challenge the 6-star blacksmith examination!

While his current cultivation was still a little too low, the depth of his comprehension in smithing was superior to most 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths. If he could pass the 6-star blacksmith examination as well, he would be spared from spending even more Academic Credits here.

Based on what he had seen and heard so far, he could tell that Academic Credits were extremely difficult to earn. There would surely be many places where he would require them in the future, so it was best for him to save as much as possible for the time being.

"Challenging the 6-star blacksmith examination is a little beyond my current cultivation at the moment. If I want to clear the examination, I won't be able to skip the forging phase anymore..."

The reason Zhang Xuan had been able to clear all of the previous examinations was because of the superior quality of the alloy he had created. As such, even though the weapons he had smithed so far were just mere lumps of steel, they were still able to reach the required grade.

However, in the 6-star examination, he would have to handle ores and metals which were beyond his current cultivation, and this meant that he wouldn't be able to process them as freely as he had all along. Due to that, it was unlikely that he would be able to clear the examination based on the quality of the alloy in itself.

In other words, if he wanted to clear the examination, he would have to forge the weapon... However, he had no experience with hammering whatsoever. If he were to start

practicing now... would he still be able to make it in time?

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